



Mexico Looks to General Obregon to Give Her Peace; New Leader Will Seek Better Relations With the U. S.

"I Would Rather See Mexicans Farmers Than Soldiers," Declares Conqueror of Carranza

By Wilbur Forrest

A SQUARE-SHOULDERED, square-jawed individual, rather commonly dressed and minus one arm, sat in a café in Mexico City a few weeks ago eating. He was under a cloud, an alleged traitor under technical arrest and waiting trial for alleged friendship with avowed enemies of the government of Mexico, accused of plotting against the régime. Government secret service men kept him under vigilant surveillance, and a bearded old gentleman in the National Palace not far away thought he had this one-armed individual completely subdued. Usually when a man is under technical arrest and surveillance in Mexico City he is as good as under lock and key.

The one-armed man was General Alvaro Obregon, undoubtedly then and without doubt now the strongest man in Mexico. As he sat munching food in that café his thoughts were possibly on the forces of men at that moment under his command throughout the country, many of them in the Federal army, who awaited a simple order to rise up and overthrow the bearded old man over there in the National Palace. A signal only was necessary to bring this about. Organization had been completed.

The signal came a few days later when the one-armed general escaped from the capital disguised as a cookman, and likewise aided by friends in the capital itself.

Now Another "Hope"

All this happened a few short weeks ago. Since then the Mexican landscape has been revolving at high speed. The bewhiskered old man has been overthrown and is dead. Mexico has another hope. The hope is Obregon.

Few folks in the United States know a great deal about Obregon.

Farmer, student, merchant, general might briefly describe him, a combination of the latter two designations being reputed to have netted him a private fortune of between five and six millions of dollars. But he is a man who reads and writes and who lives a normal life when possible with a normal family at Nogales, Sonora, within a stone's throw of American soil across the line to Nogales, Ariz.

But Obregon is not only a new hope for Mexico. He is a new hope for the United States—the basis of hope that his understanding of the great republic to the north, better than that of most Mexicans of note in Mexico, and a knowledge of what it stands for with its Monroe Doctrine will bring about cooperation and an end to Uncle Sam's long-standing Mexican problem.

Well forward in this story it must be told why General Obregon knows the United States perhaps better than any other Mexican, and how important it is in view of this that fate should have decreed that he shall lead the destinies of the southern republic after the elections set for September. That these elections will choose him as the constitutional President is regarded as certain.

German domination of Mexico during the European war became so alarming in 1918 that it was deemed necessary in Washington that some Mexican of intelligence and of ability to exercise a stabilizing influence in his country should become acquainted with the United States; given data and knowledge with which to dispel, if possible, the popular conception in Mexico that America was a land of supreme bluff where officialdom said one thing and meant another.

Carranza Pro-German

President Carranza and those immediately around him were regarded as hopelessly pro-German. It was paramount that some one should be selected from outside the inner cabinet circle, a man with intelligence and vision and of importance.

The man picked was Alvaro Obregon. Accompanied by American army officers who spoke faultless Spanish and who were amiable and interesting hosts, General Obregon toured the United States from end to end. He saw our great army cantonnments training hundreds of thousands of virile young men in the arts of modern warfare, each cantonnement housing a number of fighters equal to Mexico's entire armed force. He saw great munition works turning out hundreds of tons of conical steel

shells for use abroad, works constructing artillery and airplanes, the railroad centers moving vast supplies of munitions, food and material seaward for transport to France. He was made acquainted with the financing of the war and the almost inexhaustible funds that backed America's determination to win. He was shown the teeming shipyards, the warships and all the vast machinery of American warfare. He was entertained by the army and navy. He met Secretary of State Lansing and learned of America's real hope that Mexico would not fall into the net which German intrigue had set. And Alvaro Obregon was amazed and impressed. He went back to Mexico with a better understanding of the United States. He was a stabilizing influence.

The Obregon tour of the United States was relatively unimportant in the hectic days of 1918. But it becomes overwhelmingly important in view of present events. It presages an era of good will between Washington and Mexico City which may solely the Mexican problem.

Perhaps no man in the present-day upper stratum of Mexicans—none who has come out of the ten years of chaos in the Southern republic—has a better chance successfully to guide that much harassed nation to its feet. Perhaps no other Mexican of to-day floating about in the Mexican whirlpool of disorganization has a more wholesome regard and respect for the mighty power of America or a better understanding of America's attitude toward Mexico.

Few Mexicans of the type have had better opportunity by virtue of affiliation to sense the plight of the down-trodden, overwhelming majority—the peon—and the necessity for his gradual emancipation through uplift and education.

For once Mexico has a man destined to be elected as its leader who has the promise of the blood. Obregon is a Basque, a descendant of the sturdy admixture of bloods which inhabit the heights and valleys of the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain, the hard-working, law-abiding, intelligent little race which is neither French nor Spanish, but which sends its representatives to the lawmaking assemblies of both France and Spain, in accordance with the geographic divisions.

On Obregon's other side, the Indian blood which courses in the veins of the "New Hope" for Mexico is not that of the more unstable Aztecs, but that of the pure, unpolluted strains of Yaquis and Mayas, the agricultural tribes which inhabit the Mexican West Coast and who love their farms better than war, but who can "outwar" the best of them if driven to it.

From the stability of the Basques and the home-loving, farm-loving but hard-fighting Indians of the West Coast have come characteristics which seem to animate the new leader of Mexico and build hope for the future stability of that much torn little republic of the South. On these we cite the brief history of Obregon:

Alvaro Obregon is to-day thirty-eight years of age. Approximately thirty years of his life have been spent on a farm established by several generations of the well-to-do and respectable Sonora agricultural family.

For Home Defense

The Yaqui blood in Obregon's veins first rose up and spoke, ten years ago when as a young man who read books, had a mechanical turn of mind, and was then known as a farmer and trader, he recruited a small band of Indians and neighbors to protect their peaceful properties from marauding bands of desperadoes. A Yaqui Indian is peaceful and law-abiding until stirred up, then he is a fighter. Thus it was with Obregon. Orozco, an adherent of Madero in the latter's revolt against Porfirio Diaz, was operating in the State of Chihuahua. Then Orozco turned against Madero and ravished the state. His marauding outlaw bands filtered across the line into Sonora. Obregon and his small band defeated them and drove them out. Then Obregon extended his military operations into Chihuahua and drove Orozco across the international line into the United States.

Obregon's first military operations



THE wife of General Obregon and prospective "first lady" of Mexico

had been carried out with the consent of President Madero, who made him a general. However, the Sonoran let it be known in Mexico City that he much preferred farming to fighting, and forthwith returned to his agricultural activities. He had lost an arm in the fighting and this, perhaps, had some bearing on his peaceful demeanor, but the keynote of his character, having demonstrated the hornet-like Yaqui characteristic, now bloomed forth from the other side—the Basque. It was this statement which to-day holds forth the hope which Mexico must place in Obregon:

"I would rather teach the Mexican people the use of the toothbrush than to handle a rifle. I would rather see them in school than on battlefields. I prefer any day a good electrician, machinist, carpenter or farmer to a soldier."

Obregon's military career, however, after his retirement to the farm in 1911, was destined to be more than the leader of a small Sonora force against Orozco. Madero was assassinated in February, 1913. Obregon was among the first to denounce Huerta, Madero's successor, who usurped the Presidency in a deluge of blood and a flood of intrigue. Obregon threw in his lot with Carranza, the dictatorial old man who has just fallen, partly by the weight of sheer dictatorship and partly by the force of a movement inaugurated by the Sonora farmer-general.

Francisco Villa, whom Obregon is now called upon to subdue anew, was in the older days a co-general with Obregon in the fight of Carranza against Huerta. Villa, however, of the cruder type, and Obregon, of the higher plane, broke, and when Villa declared war on Carranza Obregon became the latter's commander in chief. In 1914 he defeated Villa at Celaya and Trinidad after more than a month of skirmishes.

When Carranza became the de facto President of Mexico he appointed Obregon Minister of War. In this position in 1916 the Sonoran went to the border and negotiated with Major General Hugh L. Scott and Frederick Funston for the withdrawal of American troops who had entered Mexico to catch Villa after Villa's raid on Columbus, N. M., where eighteen American citizens had been killed and a portion of the American city burned.

An agreement was reached at this border conference that Obregon should send 10,000 Mexican troops to the border to cooperate with American forces for the protection of the international boundary. Obregon, anxious to show his good faith, trebled the promise and sent 30,000.

Obregon Quits Carranza

The dictatorial and reactionary tendencies of Carranza, however, caused Obregon to come into serious disagreement with his chief even before the latter had been formally inaugurated as the legally prescribed constitutional President, and on May 1, 1917, the day of Carranza's induction into office, Obregon resigned as



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GENERAL OBREGON being decorated for bravery at the city of Celaya. At his left is General Carranza

Fletcher, "but if it means intervention or war, we are ready."

Coincidental with Carranza's fiery attitude the United States put forth further attempts to acquaint Mexico with the United States and the attitude of neutrality which this country desired to maintain with its southern neighbor.

A score of Mexican newspaper



PHOTO © CLINEBIST

GENERAL OBREGON, from a photograph taken while he was making a tour of the United States under the guidance of government officials

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Though he had visited the United States before, it was during 1918, when Carranza and his government were showing the most marked tendencies toward pro-Germanism and anti-Americanism, that Obregon was

picked out from all the Mexicans by the United States government and was thoroughly acquainted with the might and main of the United States.

Coincidental with this educational tour of Obregon in America, Luis Cabrera, Carranza's Minister of Finance, was in South America working for the Germans. Cabrera, known as one of the most anti-American Mexicans in Mexico, a man highly educated and extremely subtle in his machinations, had a plan for the formation of the Hispano-American alliance in South America which smelled loudly of Herr von Eckhardt, the Kaiser's representative in Mexico City.

The scheme was the diversion from the Allies and neutrals of the precious nitrates and other products of South America in return for a trade agreement with Mexico for her ores, oil, coal and other products. Cabrera visited Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and southern Brazil, outlining the advantages to these Latin-American countries of joining together with Mexico for the interchange of raw and manufactured materials, making them independent principally of the United States and secondarily of European markets.

Mexico was to furnish mainly grain, ores, oil and hemp for Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay, Argentina and Peru in return for the diversified commodities of those nations. Cabrera sought to overcome the transportation difficulties of such an interchange with the proposal of von Eckhardt and Luxemburg, the latter German Minister in Argentina, that

all German vessels interned in South American ports should, by agreement, come to the shipyards of Chile and Argentina for such repairs as needed and begin their work for the "alliance."

Cabrera received a rather chilly reception in South America. Some of his associates, appointed by Carranza to accompany him on the tour, were not of the same suave, oily disposition as the Minister of Finance, and their actions grated severely on the sense of dignity and polished bearing of the South American officials with whom they came in contact.

Kept Watch on Cabrera

The United States Naval Intelligence, then working in South America, kept an eagle eye on Cabrera and his party. On more than one occasion they posted dictographs in his hotel rooms and "listened in." The American naval agents quietly sought means to counteract Cabrera's pro-German scheme with devious methods of American and Allied propaganda. But the greatest scheme was to communicate with Washington and arrange for the educational tour of the strongest Mexican in Mexico outside the actual government. That man was Alvaro Obregon.

About the time that Luis Cabrera was working in South America and Alvaro Obregon was touring the United States, President Carranza, himself so far under the influence of his German friends, was telling Ambassador Fletcher, during a personal audience in Mexico City, that the United States would have to cease meddling in Mexican affairs or go to war with Mexico.

"We are sorry," Carranza told

A More Tolerant Attitude Toward Foreign Nations Is Forecasted by Official Statements

among nations without the good will and aid of the great neighbor to the north.

Obregon's Policy

Obregon announced his candidacy for the Mexican Presidency on June 28, 1919. He stated his policy on international affairs as follows:

"Inviolability of Mexican sovereignty; absolute respect for the sovereignty and institutions of other peoples; complete recognition of all the rights legitimately acquired in Mexico in absolute conformity to its laws by all strangers; to give all facilities to capital that desires to invest in Mexico for development of its natural resources; extension in the most ample manner to foreigners resident in Mexico of all the guaranties and prerogatives Mexican law concedes to them; a frank tendency to reinforce and widen Mexico's foreign relations."

It should not be concluded from the above, however, that the future President of Mexico has any inclination to allow unscrupulous foreigners to operate his republic for him. The greatest promise he holds out to them is exactly what Carranza withheld from them—fair treatment; or, in the gambling house sense, a chance to play on the level. Carranza allowed his immediate and petty subordinates to "milk" the foreign corporations of Mexico for heavy graft and atop that taxed them in every possible way.

"I do not believe in making Mexico a mother to foreigners and a stepmother to Mexicans," declared Obregon some time ago in discussing the question. "They should be taxed, but treated fairly."

Probably the greatest handicap in the great problem which Obregon faces in Mexico, however, is a fearless impetuosity—possibly the fear-

would be happy to give my modest forces in helping your government in any place I might be used."

Neither may Obregon be stated to be in absolute accord with President Wilson's policy with regard to Mexico. Writing in "The Outlook," on one occasion he stated:

"The greatest failing of President Wilson is that his acts so seldom coincide with his words. He makes too many declarations that have no facts behind them. You need not examine his Mexican policy for substantiation of this; just look at the record of his dealings with Germany."

There are other things "against" Obregon which may militate against his immediate recognition as a regularly constituted President of Mexico by the United States, but it is probably better, in the opinion of students of Mexico's turbulent history, that the United States "forget it" and give Obregon a chance.

A Triumphant Entry

Before his last triumphal entry into Mexico City following the campaign which resulted in the ignominious downfall of Carranza, Obregon made one other triumphal entry into the capital. This was on January 28, 1915, leading the army which defeated Zapata and threw Huerta from power. Mexico City was sacked and many terrible things happened. Obregon's enemies say that he not only condoned these terrible acts but that many outrages were perpetrated under his personal direction. Again, at Guadalajara, he has been accused of the degradation of the American flag. However, even Obregon's enemies have been charitable enough to say that he was probably carrying out orders from higher authority.

Obregon faces one of the hardest tasks and one of the most complicated situations that ever confronted a statesman or soldier. He must either conciliate or eliminate such enemies as Pancho Villa, Felix Diaz and a host of lesser feudists who are seemingly irreconcilable to any régime in Mexico. He must rehabilitate the currency of the country and begin to pay interest on the colossal national debt of Mexico. He must negotiate loans with which to restock the railroads in rolling stock, now sadly depleted, and he must teach his Mexican politicians that the time has come when personal ambitions must be overwhelmingly superseded by national welfare if Mexico is to survive the terrible state in which she finds herself.

The peons of Mexico are looking to Obregon and his promises to give them a fair deal, uplift and educate them—teach them the use of the toothbrush rather than to handle a rifle.

The great foreign interests of Mexico are looking to the new leader to make good on his "fair deal" and "let live" pronouncements.

Obregon himself has had the lesson of intrigue. It was Carranza's intrigue in the national elections, set for July, in which he was a candidate, to beat him by the sheer power of Carranza's control of the military. Beginning in Sonora, his home state, Obregon enlisted the aid of his faithful Yaquis, organized the military forces otherwise in the state, and placed all under the command of Adolfo de la Huerta and General Plutarco E. Calles. Then he left Sonora to organize elsewhere.

Sonora struck first, throwing off the Carranza yoke. Then Obregon's genius for organization began to show up in full light at various parts of the republic. State after state threw off allegiance to Carranza and the dictator fell.

Tried to Save Carranza

Few people who have watched the kaleidoscopic events in Mexico during the last few weeks, culminating with the assassination of Carranza in the mountains of Puebla, are willing to believe that Obregon had any connection with the last act in the drama—the brutal killing. On the other hand, it is evident from the record of the future President that he did everything in his power to avoid such a crime.

Adolfo de la Huerta, the new provisional President of Mexico, will turn over his seat to Obregon after the elections in September. And it is to Obregon that Mexico looks for redemption. The blood of the Pyrenees and the blood of the stolid Yaquis mixed in the veins of this man may empower him with capabilities for the task. Time will tell.



PHOTO © INTERNATIONAL

HERE is one of the biggest of General Obregon's problems, Villa, the outlaw leader, who must be subdued or pacified

men were invited to see the sights, and did. They were entertained throughout the country and in Washington. As a further campaign of education in Mexico itself the government sent an average of 4,000 photographs weekly to Mexico, and in all hundreds of thousands of postcards depicting American scenes, 2,000,000 publications printed in Spanish and some tens of thousands of buttons showing United States and Allied flags "United for Honor." About one hundred reading rooms were distributed throughout the republic, and American firms doing business in Mexico aided in the distribution of this material of education.

Convinced Obregon

Carranza and his cohorts remained anti-American until the last, however, but it is believed that the educational tour of Obregon and the general campaign to offset Mexico's pro-German schemes in South America did much to bring about the failure of Cabrera's plot. It did more. It convinced Alvaro Obregon that Carranza's plan of anti-Americanism was all wrong, and that Mexico could never take her place again

lessness of the Yaqui overshadowing the stability of the Basque at times, which seems to have cropped out often in the career of the Mexican general.

He has often personally directed his Mexican soldiers in situations which were extremely dangerous. On one occasion, early during his disagreement with Villa, he rode into the camp of the latter and was faced by a firing squad. His coolness forced Villa's admiration, and he was allowed to go.

Even after his "tour of education" in the United States, during which he saw the fallacy of attempting to oppose the United States in war as Carranza would do; saw a military machine which could reduce Mexico without effort; an organization of men and weapons such as few of the greatest nations might boast, Obregon lost his head momentarily during the crisis precipitated by the Jenkins case and on August 24, 1919, sent Carranza the following message:

"In the difficult international situation through which we now are passing, I am proud to tell you that in the very remote contingency under which the situation might not reach a satisfactory conclusion, I